

## **Bo Mapping Project – Summary report by John Archer, October 2010**

During my visit to Bo earlier this year, I discussed with the Mayor, Wusu Sannoh, some thoughts on planning the future development of Bo. The proposal to put together a planning framework for the City was already part of the three year action plan agreed with the City to assist progress on a range of issues including Waste management, Environmental Health, Finance and Governance.

During the Mayor's return visit to the UK in March we discussed development planning for Bo again in more detail and worked up a Project Plan as a way forward. I will be returning to Bo in November to help the City Council get started on the project.

Lack of up to date maps of the rapidly growing city was an issue that we also discussed, initially in Bo. William Alpha, Chief Administrator of the City Council told me of a project at the Mercy Mission Hospital that was producing new maps of the City. We visited and met Rashid Ansumana and his team in a very well equipped lab where it was explained that a project was under way to study disease characteristics/distribution in Bo. By mapping the occurrence of the pathogens that were being investigated, this would enable better systems of response to disease outbreak to be put in place.

Because of the lack of available maps, the project was engaged in surveying the whole of the City from scratch, creating a new, electronically based map of all of the built up area. This was a very impressive undertaking in itself and it was clear that such a map could also be a major help for the Planning Project.

The project was not yet completed, but Rashid was happy to work with the City Council and record mapping information that could be of use to them as well.

It was apparent there was a real opportunity to work together here and on my return to the UK we continued developing the link with the Mercy Hospital based project and eventually made contact with the main funding support from the USA. This support transpired to be from the US Navy who were interested in developing their body of knowledge on tropical diseases to assist in possible future treatment of naval personnel. It was also clear that the people involved were genuinely keen to give real support to Sierra Leone in addressing its serious health issues.

The US Navy could not have been more helpful and after some negotiation and the signing of a joint memorandum of understanding on use of the material, it was agreed that the Local Government Project/OWL could have access to all the mapping information. This was a tremendous help as it means that we now have access to an up to date mapping base for the City which we can use either electronically or as hard copy plans to help us in our Planning Project and for other developmental work.

We were fortunate to meet Rashid again in early October and learned more about him and his work. He was on a visit to the School of Tropical Medicine at Liverpool University to meet his Phd supervisor. At the end of the visit he managed to spend his last day in the UK with us in Leamington as an overnight stop over on his way back to Heathrow.

I met and hosted him and it was very quickly apparent that he was a very capable and committed individual. He had been to school in Bo where he very clearly remembers reading from books that were sent out by OWL. He then went to Njala University, where he gained a Biology degree, followed by time in Freetown, teaching and researching whilst working towards being a research biologist. Through his own contacts and efforts, he gained the US funding for his present project and has learned all the skills across the board needed to deliver it. He continues to develop and expand the scope of the project as well as undertaking teaching/supervision at Njala University.

His commitment to the future of Sierra Leone was most impressive. He could move to the US and earn more, if he chose, but was very clear in seeing his future as staying in Sierra Leone and using his skills to help his country.

During his visit, he explained the detail of his project to the Planning/Observatory/OWL team at a meeting at Warwickshire CC and talked further about himself and his work at an evening get together at Jane's house.

Altogether, it was a most rewarding visit and another link that will undoubtedly continue to be beneficial on both a personal and professional basis.



Rashid Ansumana with the OWL Local Authority group in Warwick

I will be meeting Rashid again during my visit to Bo in November when we start moving forward again on the Planning Project. Both Clive Harridge and I are working on the project and we hope that it will enable the City Council to set out its priorities for where it wants to locate new commercial areas/services/community facilities/roads etc on a more coordinated basis. The output will, hopefully be a plan of the city with the future uses of land set out, somewhat in the way of a simplified version of the Warwick District Local Plan.

We are well aware of the difficulties of introducing some form of planning where little exists at present, but there is clearly the will to do so at the City

Council and our role is to assist the Council make the progress they wish to see.

Unfortunately, Clive is not able to come on this particular visit, but remains fully committed to the project and will be continuing to work with the Council in the future. His particular interest in developing world issues is demonstrated by his recent election as Secretary General to the Commonwealth Association of Planners.

The forthcoming visit to Bo is not dealing only with planning issues. A major part of it will be progressing a number of Environmental Health projects in the agreed Action Plan, including hydrant and water tank provision. Richard Hall, Head of Environmental Health at Warwick District Council will be travelling to Bo with me to work on these.

We have seen some good progress over the last eight months or so, particularly involving the link with Rashid and his team. We hope we can build further on this during our forthcoming visit.